

# S P E E C H

OF

JAMES MONCREIFF, Esq., M.P., LL.D.,

*Dean of the Faculty of Advocates,*

DELIVERED AT

A MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN,

IN THE MUSIC HALL BUILDINGS, ABERDEEN,

*On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1868.*

G. G. BROWN, Esq., A.M., M.C., M.D.,  
*Late Inspector-General of Hospitals, Bengal Establishment,*  
IN THE CHAIR.

PRINTED BY REQUEST.

ABERDEEN:  
PRINTED BY G. CORNWALL AND SONS.

---

1868.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2019 with funding from  
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30569102>

Mr. MONCREIFF said—Gentlemen, I have responded with the greatest pleasure to the invitation of your Committee, who requested me to come here to-day, and address the new constituency of the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen. I did so with the more pleasure that this is the first time I have ever had the honour of addressing an Aberdeen audience. (Applause.) And I am deeply gratified that the first occasion on which it has fallen to my lot to do so should be one so flattering to me as well as so interesting in itself. It has been said, and, indeed, truly said, that for the candidate or the nominee of a University, with a view to its representation, to address his expected constituency, is contrary to established rule and practice. The only rule and practice there can be in this matter is, of course, derived from the sister Universities in England. And I believe it is perfectly true that it has not been usual for candidates or nominees to address University constituencies in this way. But, at the same time, it does not appear to me that there is anything in principle that should make it improper for those who intend to give their suffrages to know something of the man for whom they propose to vote and of the opinions which he holds. (Applause.) If, therefore, the Committee here thought that it might tend to forward their objects that I should come and state my opinions by word of mouth, I think the proposal was a reasonable one for them to make, and one which it was equally reasonable for me to accept. (Applause.) Gentlemen, there may be some advantages also in setting an example in this matter. The old system in England manifestly arose at a time when communication was less frequent, and when it was not so easy to communicate what was said to those at a distance. The constituency was widely scattered. Consequently, addressing such a constituency was a thing which was almost impossible in itself. But now, when we can not only assemble at such a meeting as this, but can disseminate what is said by means of the press through the constituency over the whole

country, it does not appear to me that there is anything that can be called improper or unsuitable in my addressing you to-day. (Applause.)

There is another consideration that may not, perhaps, be without its value. I have a great respect for the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and I have a great respect for the representatives whom they have sent to Parliament. But, unfortunately, it is a fact that the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have for the most part sent representatives who did not speak the opinions which I believe to be the opinions of the people of this country. (Hear.) And when they did happen to be honoured by having a representative that would have bestowed lustre upon any constituency however important—(applause)—and any University however learned; when they had one man of mark—beyond all question the brightest ornament they could have had for their representative,—you know how they treated him. Oxford discarded William Gladstone—(applause)—the moment she found that the pressure of conviction on his mind in the direction of liberal thought was beginning to overcome the early opinions that he had imbibed within her walls. (Applause.) Therefore, it occurs to me that it may not be without its use, even to set this example of a little infringement of old and established rules; and, perhaps, the healthful spirit of liberal opinion may be promoted, if for the future it shall be the practice of those who aspire to the representation of Universities to come manfully forward and express their views as I propose now to do. (Applause.) I am glad, however, to hear a rumour which has only reached me since I entered these walls, that Oxford itself is beginning to think of retracing its steps; and, after all, it is possible that our great leader may find himself in nomination for the University which, not to his dishonour, and certainly little to her honour, rejected him before. (Applause.)

With this apology for having taken this mode of expressing my opinions, I must now go on to thank the committee and the constituency most heartily for the honour they did me in requesting me to allow myself to be put in nomination for the great distinction of becoming your representative. I feel it to be a very great distinction. The proposal was made to me in a manner so flattering, and came to me with so much support behind it, and seemed to me to imply principles so important, that, although I had other suggestions made to me from other quarters, I did not hesitate

to put myself entirely in the hands of the committee. (Applause.) We have, no doubt, a very laborious contest before us—if a contest it is to be called. That is to say, there is a considerable difference of opinion in the ranks of the constituency, as to the merits and political principles of the two nominees. But whatever be the issue of our contest, I am content. I have had the honour, which I hold to be great, of being requested by a large and influential number of this constituency to represent them in Parliament, and come defeat or come victory, I shall be satisfied with the result. (Applause.) Gentlemen, I am the more flattered by the invitation from Aberdeen, that I have really no connection that I could name with the constituency or the University. With Glasgow I had some relations. I held the office of Dean of the Faculties in that University for three years; and, as I explained in the observations I made at Glasgow, my father and my grandfather had their training at that University. But with Aberdeen I have no connection at all. It must, therefore, have been the political life I had spent—the opinion which my friends here have of the way in which I had discharged such political duties as fell to my lot, and whatever general reputation I have made for industry and assiduity as a member of Parliament, that directed attention to me. I feel, therefore, all the more grateful to them.

But, gentlemen, the interest I have taken in this part of the country is by no means in proportion to the amount of connexion I have had with it. I had long looked with great interest to the whole of this great district, and I know none that could be more properly the subject of University representation. I know no district of this country, or any country, where the whole educational system is more directly imprinted upon the national character. It has been peculiar in many respects. The facilities that have been held out to even the children of the very lowest ranks in society to acquire information and knowledge which may lead them to distinction in after life, have nowhere been so great, and nowhere borne fruits so remarkable, as in this district in which I am now speaking, in connection with the University of Aberdeen. (Applause.) It has been the glory of this country, and the result is that there has been impressed upon the population of this district the mark of intellectual power and firmness, which has led many of its sons to positions of eminence in different parts of the world; and even now, as from the days of the Gregorys, down to the present, you

send out men from Aberdeen who have shone in physical science with the brightest names of the intellectual world. (Applause.) It has fallen to my lot, in the course of my Parliamentary life, to come in contact with men of distinction, who were strong types of what I say. Two of them occur to me at this moment, and they are two names of great eminence and celebrity—one an example of a man taught in the parish schools of this district, the other an example of an alumnus of Aberdeen University. And I do not think I could select among all the men who have honoured me with their friendship in Parliament two more distinctive or characteristic men of their time. The first was Joseph Hume. I was fortunate enough to be in Parliament for some years during the lifetime of Joseph Hume. He took a great interest in those Scottish matters which were brought before Parliament, and I knew him very well. He was a very remarkable man; and I believe this country lies under the deepest debt of gratitude to Joseph Hume for his exertions in the furtherance of Liberal principles and the promotion of all that was popular in politics. (Cheers.) But it was not merely his opinions, nor even the strength of his intellectual power, that was most remarkable in him. It was the sturdy steadfastness he exhibited—his refusal to take a denial, and his determined and persevering advocacy of what he thought to be right, in spite of obstructions, in spite of ridicule, in spite of what would have been to other men sheer despair. (Hear, hear.) When he began his endeavour to reform the financial system of the country, he was the subject of unsparing ridicule from the Conservative party, and I am afraid of some cold support even from our own. But he persevered in spite of every difficulty and of all obstructions; and before he died, in a ripe and honoured old age, he had seen all the opinions, which had at first been so derided, approved, applauded, and adopted. (Hear, hear.) He lived to see measures, which, when he entered Parliament, would have been thought utterly hopeless, carried and made the law of the land, to the great benefit of the country. (Cheers.) Now, here was a man who, I believe, had no education except that which he obtained at a parochial school. (Hear, hear.) There is no doubt that he studied for his profession afterwards, but his career showed how strong and firm and solid a grounding is that of our parochial school system, producing, as it did in his case, fruits so honourable to himself and so beneficent to the country. (Hear, hear.) The other ex-

ample that is present to me just now was a very different man—in some respects an abler man: a man, however, who rather preferred the reality to the show of power in politics; the *fallentis semita ritæ*, who chose a less conspicuous part—the solid but more obscure part of counselling and advising rather than ostensibly leading, I refer to the late Edward Ellice, one of the ablest men I ever came in contact with; a man who was not so prominently before the public eye as some others his inferiors, but who, I believe, did as much in the direction of public affairs, in the swaying of the balance of parties, and in controlling the House of Commons and the Government, as any man who ever took part in the public affairs of the country. (Hear, hear.) He was kind enough, when I first went to London, to honour me with much of his friendship and assistance. I never had a sounder adviser, I never had an abler or more steadfast friend; and my intimacy with him enabled me to know how zealously and how powerfully he laboured for the popular cause. And although, as I have said, his name did not appear so often as others in the public prints, he was a man of much influence, who had European relations of all kinds—a man who held the helm of affairs unseen, whose support was a treasure to any Government, and whose opposition was always to be dreaded. (Hear, hear.) He was an alumnus of Marischal College, Aberdeen. (Hear, hear.) It was there he received his training, and to the latest days of his life his heart beat with affection for his old *Alma Mater*. Throughout the discussion of all University matters, no one was more anxious and eager than he upon those subjects which were so near his heart. (Cheers.) I have mentioned these two men, because they strike me as characteristic types of what may be effected by the Scottish system of education—(hear, hear)—both well worthy of the country from whence they came, and both of whom did great service in their day and generation.

There is a third name which, since I am dealing with these matters, I should like to mention before leaving this train of thought. It is that of a still more distinguished man than either of those I have referred to—at least, if we look at the position he occupied as Prime Minister of England—I allude to the late Lord Aberdeen. (Hear, hear.) He was, I think, Chancellor of one of the Universities. He was a man who took the greatest interest in the wellbeing of the Scottish Universities, and to whom those Universities are under a deep and lasting obligation. (Cheers.) I have previously

Lord Aberdeen

had occasion to speak of the removal of the tests from the Universities of Scotland, and I had the pleasure of being the person who introduced the measure, which was ultimately successful, for that purpose ; but I said at Glasgow, and I here repeat, with the deepest gratitude and veneration for the memory of that most excellent man, that all our labours would have been utterly fruitless, and I should in vain have endeavoured to pass that measure through the House of Lords, had it not been for the personal influence of Lord Aberdeen, who, coming as he did with a great Scottish connexion, and with the great weight he had in the public affairs of England, wielded a power over that House which I do not believe any other person could in that matter have exercised. And I mention his name now with the greatest veneration because I was myself individually indebted to him for a long course of confidence and kindness. (Hear, hear.) I was Lord Advocate when he was Prime Minister, and he was in a position which no other Prime Minister has occupied during my time, for he had a large acquaintance with Scottish affairs, and extensive Scottish relations ; and never, to my dying day, shall I forget the kind, courteous, and considerate confidence he reposed in me. There were difficulties and delicate positions, as you may easily understand, between the Whig Lord Advocate and the Peelite Prime Minister ; and nothing but the well-known gentle breeding of the man, his consideration for others, his sense of right and truth and justice, could have enabled me to surmount those difficulties. On no occasion whatever did he fail to treat me as I should wish to be treated ; and I have pleasure in the position I occupy as a candidate for the representation of these Universities, in paying this feeble and humble tribute to one whose memory I recall with the greatest admiration and reverence. (Cheers.)

**The Constituency.** Such, as I have hastily sketched them, are my associations with this district and with the Universities you have nominated me to represent. I now come to the question—What are my claims to your notice ; what is the nature of the constituency which has been created ; and what is the nature of the duties it is proposed to impose upon me ? I am very glad, indeed, that the Universities have been enfranchised ; and my belief is, that they will make a good and efficient as well as an intelligent constituency. (Cheers.) It has been said, and said with perfect truth, as one of the weapons in this warfare—and here let me say that I think, at all events, since we are to have a contest, an academic contest should be conducted with

courtesy and with dignity. I said at Glasgow, and I say again, we have no antagonists. I am not, in the proper sense of the word, a candidate. One class of the constituency hold a particular set of opinions ; they look out for a man who holds opinions in unison with their own, and the same thing happens in the case of those who hold different opinions. It is quite true that when I proposed a Reform Bill for Scotland in 1866 I only proposed to give one member to the four Universities, and it is also true that the present Government made a different proposal, and were successful in carrying it. I can only say I am very glad that the two members have been given to the Universities ; but the difficulties I experienced were great in this matter, as in many other matters it has been my duty to bring before Parliament. The proposal I thought it expedient to make was not necessarily all I could have wished to have been carried. We were surrounded by difficulties. The seats to be given were few, and they were well scrambled for in the *melee*, and it does not in the least follow that I got my own way in 1866—though upon that I need not say anything, because, of course, I was responsible for the proposition I made. There was a large amount of opinion on the side of the Liberal party this year against enfranchising the constituency at all. I was not of that opinion. I thought the constituency proposed would make a very good and available constituency ; and I am quite certain, from what I have seen on the present canvass, and from what I see before me now, that my opinion was thoroughly right. It was said by those who were against this view—" You will enfranchise nobody but ministers, doctors, and schoolmasters, and the result will be that the candidate will sacrifice religion to the clergy, health to the doctors, and education to the schoolmasters." Gentlemen, this epigram was smartly expressed, but I believe it was unjust. I am satisfied that your representative will go to Parliament not as the representative of particular professions, but as the representative of the whole University, of that which embraces the whole course and circle of intellectual thought in this country, in its immediate relation to public affairs and the welfare of the people. I will not go there as the delegate of this or of that profession ; and I am quite certain that the various members of this constituency will exercise their franchise not with a view to their callings in life, but as constituent portions of an intelligent and intellectual constituency. They are supposed to see with a larger eye, and to be enabled to judge in a more philosophic spirit, those great

questions of political and social interest which it is the duty of Parliament to decide. (Hear, hear.) I say this because such is the only position which it would be honourable for me to occupy or for you to send me to fill. (Cheers.) I cannot go as a delegate; you would not wish me to go as a delegate; and I do not believe there is one member of this constituency who will not vote in this contest on large and public grounds. On this footing I can conceive no greater honour which could befall a statesman than to be chosen to represent such a constituency as this in the Parliament of the country. (Hear, hear.)

Such being the nature of the constituency, let me ask what claims I have, or have I any claims to its representation? I should say, in the first place, it is needless for me to speak much about myself. I have been before the public for a great many years. I have been in Parliament for eighteen years or thereabouts. I have been conversant with public affairs during all that time, and, therefore, whatever character or reputation I may have acquired, the public have the means of judging of them for themselves. I am afraid that I cannot come forward with promises of greater exertion than I have hitherto made. I have always felt an ardent love for my native country, and I have endeavoured to promote its welfare, perhaps not always wisely, often, probably, somewhat feebly, but, I am quite certain, conscientiously and truly. I explained at Glasgow that all the training I ever had was obtained in a Scottish University. I was an alumnus in the University of Edinburgh, where I went through the whole curriculum. I was there, indeed, for seven years, and I know, therefore, what should be the position of a University. (Hear, hear.) In fact, I have had every means of obtaining a knowledge of its wants and requirements, its benefits and appliances. What progress I may have made, what I may have acquired there, it is needless for me to say. In physical science, no doubt, my progress was not great. Nature seemed rather, at that time at all events, to rebel against the attempt, but still there has clung around me, almost in spite of nature, something of what I learned, or attempted to learn, in those years. But with the literary part of the curriculum it was different. I think I may say that I had very considerable enthusiasm for that department of learning. I remember well—and the recollection comes across me as the air of the mountain and the breath of the heather come across the wearied denizens of dusty cities and crowded courts.

— I remember the trumpet-tongued Wilson, when he was Professor of Moral Philosophy, and how he seemed to awaken a new life within me, and to produce emotions which I had not before suspected. (Hear, hear.) I have never forgotten them from that day, and even now, though it has been my lot rather to tread in the dusty highways of the law, I am afraid my heart inclines me much more to the flowery paths of literature, and that I would willingly turn aside and spend in them time which I am obliged to spend in more useful, if less pleasant, duties. (Cheers.) Your Chairman has been kind enough to speak in a very kindly way of my literary attainments. I am afraid they would make a very slender claim upon my part to represent a University. A few fugitive writings in the periodicals of the day constitute all I have ever aspired to in this direction ; and yet I cannot but recollect with gratification, and perhaps with some amount of vanity, that the great critic, I mean Lord Jeffrey, with whose friendship I was honoured—and all who knew anything of him know what a privilege that was—selected me to review in the journal which he established the two first volumes of “ Macaulay’s History ”—a duty which I believe I performed to his satisfaction. (Cheers.) I only mention this to say a word in passing on that great and honoured name. The review was in itself a trifle, but the opportunity of knowing Lord Jeffrey, and listening to his words of wisdom, of eloquence, and power, constituted an education such as few men have had it in their power to obtain. (Hear, hear.) I say I knew him, and I had the introduction to that circle in which, having seen many men and many forms of society since, I will venture to say learning and eloquence, wit and wisdom, power and thought, were combined in a degree which I believe is not to be found at the present moment in any circle in this land. (Hear, hear.) They are all gone now, but they were great men in their time. Henry Brougham, before he died at the venerable age of ninety, was the last survivor of the circle they formed, of the work they did, and the revolution they effected, not in literature only, but in politics—with results which may be seen to this day, and which will last for many a day to come. It is from them that we have obtained many of the privileges we now possess. They fought the battle ; they mined slowly the fortress of ignorance and bigotry. Their names, I fear, are not so often remembered as they ought to be ; but I, at all events, could not make this exposition of the opinions I hold without paying my tribute to the source from whence I derived them.

I believe those men to have laid the foundation of all that has been popular and liberal not only on this side of the Tweed, but on the other also ; and that what they did was the germ of the whole of that movement for political liberty which has brought us to our present pitch of national freedom. (Hear, hear.)

I have made these observations, not because I think my claim rests in the slightest degree on my University education, or the few trivial aberrations I have made into the forbidden paths of literature—I put any claim I may have on a totally different ground. In fact, the main ground on which I base my claims is my political opinions ; for whatever may be said of University representation, it is political representation, and must be so. (Hear, hear.) Parliament is politics. You cannot have a man in Parliament without his being a politician, and I do not like to see a man in Parliament who is not a politician. (Hear, hear.) Such a man never knows which way to go, and he generally goes wrong. (Hear, hear.) He does not know which lobby he ought to be in, and he is usually found in the wrong lobby. (Hear.) And, although I know that many a man will profess himself no politician, I cannot but look, I will not say suspicion on his motives, but with great suspicion on his wisdom. (Hear, hear.) No man can be a good member of Parliament who is not a politician. Of course this does not mean that you are to surrender your judgment and conscience into the hands of a party, but it does mean that without general concert and action in Parliament you cannot give effect to the opinions you hold and maintain. You become in that case useless and a mere cypher ; in fact, you are worse than a cypher, because the result of striking one person off from any party in this case or in that, leads to nothing but the neutralisation of that person's own influence, and to keeping back the Legislature from forwarding the very cause he would wish to see advanced in this country. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, this is a political contest, and it can be nothing but a political contest. It is a contest between the political opinions of two great parties in the country, and if it had not been so I do not think I should have been here. I have been an adherent of the Liberal party all my political life, and I am not likely to quit it now. (Cheers.) The first claim I have upon you is that I have held and acted upon for a great many years the principles of the great Liberal party in this country. (Cheers.)

There are two characteristics of the Liberal party ; and

it is as well to have a test, because there are apparently a great many now who profess to hold their opinions, (Hear, hear.) There are two tests which I hold to be conclusive. I do not take what people may promise to do; I am not here to make promises—they are very easily made; but what are they prepared to surrender and endure for the popular principle? (Hear, hear.) That is the first test. The second is, when they are defeated upon the opinions they profess, are they prepared to renounce, or are they prepared still to adhere to them? (Loud cheers.) These are the proper tests of those who are the true holders of Liberal opinions. There are, no doubt, true holders of Conservative opinions, and probably the same test will suit them also; but, meanwhile, what has been the conduct of the Liberal party? What have they not surrendered and endured for the freedom of the people of this country? Did they, surrender their opinions when they were defeated? Nay, from every fall they suffered—and many they had—they only rose the stronger and the more confident. (Hear, hear.) Did they endeavour to acquire the sweets of office by surrendering when defeated the principles they had formerly maintained? I know that Aberdeen contains—and there are no more steadfast Liberals than are to be found in Aberdeen—men who even yet remember the time when it was no slight matter to profess to love the popular principle, or to be the friend of the people. (Hear, hear.) Why were the Liberal party excluded from office by their own deliberate choice for so long a period—I think from 1783 to 1830? It was simply because they scorned to desert the banner under which they had enlisted, however few might be those who followed it, and however hopeless might be their cause. (Cheers.) Then, again, when they were defeated, they did not desert their cause, but they came up to the charge over and over again. If, however, we look to the other side, I am afraid we shall find the picture hardly so pleasant. We know what the opinions of the Conservatives have been, or I may as well call them by their old and more honoured name—the Tories. I think that a much better and more honourable name than the longer and more classical word. What, I ask, were their opinions? We know what they were. We know how they obstructed every effort that was made between the beginning of the present century and 1831 for the Reform of Parliament. We know how they maintained the Corn-Laws and the Roman Catholic and Jewish disabilities, and what has been

the result? These things have gone—they are dead—and no one proposes to restore the rotten burghs, to re-enact the Corn-Laws, or to reimpose the ecclesiastical tests. They are, as I have said, completely gone, as Milton describes the extinction of the heathen deities:—

“Their oracles are dumb,  
No voice or hideous hum  
Runs through the arched roof with words deceiving.”

The whole thing has perished, and there is nobody now who will maintain for a moment those doctrines which were the capital of that party from the beginning of the century, until one by one they fell beneath the will of the people.

But why is it that the doctrines maintained by that party always disappeared the moment they were defeated? (Hear, hear.) It is said that we should never have obtained Household Suffrage but through the Tory Government; and I believe the statement to be perfectly true. I shall say a word or two upon the subject immediately; but what I want to point out now is, that if in truth they have faith in their own opinions, how is it that they do not maintain them, as we have maintained ours, in spite of all disasters? (Cheers.) If they have no faith in their own opinions, and are satisfied they were delusive, I want to know what is the proper course which every lover of his country should take under such circumstances. Is it to choose the side of those who have tried obstruction till obstruction has become impossible, and who have delayed the future prosperity of this country to a degree that can hardly be calculated? or to throw in his lot with those who, through sunshine and through shade, have maintained the same set of principles, and are prepared to maintain them still? (Cheers.)

But the result of the proceedings of the last Parliament has raised a very serious question in regard to this subject. It is quite true that without the Tory Government we might never have had this Reform Bill or Household Suffrage, but then it is equally true that unless we had had the Tory Government, the Tory opposition would have prevented us from carrying Household Suffrage. (Hear, hear.) I wonder, therefore, that in making the statement I have referred to, our friends, the Tories, do not see that they are pronouncing their own condemnation. Why is it that we have been so long about Reform? Simply because our Tory friends would not allow us to carry it. (Hear,

hear.) Mr. Fox proposed Household Suffrage in 1795, and if the Conservative Government had only allowed him to carry his own measure we should have had for more than seventy years all the advantages which it would have produced. But they went on obstructing Reform until 1867, and in 1867 they suddenly arrived at the conviction that, so far from their being any danger in extending the franchise, it was a highly desirable measure. They had never suggested that £7 was too high before, but they had obstructed that proposal when it was made, on the ground that it was too democratic. But in 1867 they discovered that Household Suffrage was a desirable measure. And they managed to pass it, and when they did so, they were only giving effect to principles which we had uniformly supported, and which they had as uniformly opposed. (Hear, and applause.) I am too old a politician to mince matters upon such a subject, having lived a life in which all the aspirations of ambition, as far as I am personally concerned, have been satisfied—I mean in regard to the mere externals of political life. I have still the ambition to serve my country, and I hope to do so for years to come. But I say I am in a position to speak without reserve on this subject. I think it was well for our party that we went into Opposition. It appeared to me that there were elements in our party that would be all the better for the cool breezes on that side of the House, and I do not think we have suffered by what has taken place. I am not even disposed to say that the alternative of Tory rule may not be under some circumstances wholesome. Something at any rate was required to clear the atmosphere; and if that was to be obtained by a change of seats in the House of Commons, I do not think the penalty paid on the one side was very great, or that the prize obtained by the other is one which we ought to grudge. This, however, is not the matter to be considered. What I lament to see, and what I have lamented to see during the whole of the Parliament, is the forgetfulness which has been exhibited of the old rules of political honour, morality, and principle. I do not think it a spectacle which ought to have been exhibited to the public of this country that the Opposition of 1866 should have denounced a £7 franchise as dangerous and democratic, and that the same party, when in office, should in 1867 have proposed Household Suffrage as an entirely safe and proper measure. I say that such conduct strikes a blow, in the opinion of the public, at the morality of public men, which is to my mind very lamentable. (Hear, hear.) I

do not believe that, under any circumstances, the Liberal party or a Liberal Government could have said and done such things as have been said and done by the Conservative Government. (Hear, hear.) No doubt they are honourable men individually. I have nothing to say, nor do I wish to say a word that may be offensive to any one belonging to that party. I am speaking of the large views and the collective action of the Government, and I say it is a lamentable thing that such a course should have been taken. (Hear, hear.) If the Conservatives admitted that they had been wrong in regard to this measure of Reform, that their fears were the fears of the brave and their follies the follies of the wise, their duty was plain. They should have said to their antagonists —“We were wrong and you were right, but it is not for us to expose ourselves to the imputations of holding office after having changed our opinions, and therefore we resign to you the seats we have been occupying.” (Loud cheers.) Their conduct has been a great drawback to what I should otherwise have considered a very great advantage, I mean, the passing of the Reform Bill. I am glad, however, that it has passed, because it has settled the question, and upon the whole it has settled it well. There are some things in the Scotch Reform Bill which I regard as altogether and utterly absurd ; but they have arisen from no fault of the Lord Advocate ; they are simply the consequence of the Government insisting on their nostrum of making rating the basis of the franchise, which has involved affairs in England in inextricable confusion, and which in this country leads to results which are, as I have said, absurd. (Hear, hear.) I have made these remarks because I think it will be the first duty of the new constituencies to see that adherence to public principle is put on its old salutary footing. I hold this to be the very essence of our free government. We can have no respect from the public unless public men adhere to their professions and principles. They are bound to do this. What, after all, is office ? No doubt office is a thing to which a man may very fairly aspire, and power is to be valued when it can be exercised for that which we believe to be for the benefit of the country.; but power on such terms as involve the conversion of the great science of politics into the mere art of finesse, trying to out-bid an opponent by laying down the first card which comes in your hand, is not consistent with the great and solemn duty which the representatives of the people have to discharge.

This brings me to the question of the Irish Church. I am

very glad Mr. Gladstone has made the proposal he has brought forward, and that he has made it in the way he has. I do not mean to go into any discussion on the Irish Church, or the state of its finances, or the reasons for doing away with the establishment. I believe it is admitted to have long been in a position in which it was doomed the moment a serious and earnest effort was made to overturn it. (Hear, hear.) And I think it was justly doomed, because, although I am not one of those who hold the Voluntary principle, and although I maintain in the abstract the doctrine of an Established Church, I hold that the Irish Church is at war with every principle and every practice upon which an Established Church ought to be maintained. (Hear, hear.) You cannot defend the principle of an Establishment and at the same time defend the Irish Church. The Irish Establishment ought never to have existed. It serves no purpose ; it does not promote the Protestant religion ; it tends rather to retard than to advance the prevalence and the progress of truth, while, on the other hand, it keeps up an irritation of a most dangerous kind—an irritation that simply works in this way. When there are materials, as there plainly are in the groundwork of Irish society, tending to disaffection, and the middle and upper classes are still smarting under a sense of inferiority and injustice, notwithstanding their undoubted loyalty, it still needs all our own efforts and their efforts to generate a more wholesome feeling among the lower portion of the peasantry. This is no matter to trifle with. It is all very well now, when we are in peace and good times ; but the man is a fool who does not look forward and see what a source of weakness this may be by-and-by, if at any time we should again be called upon to buckle on our armour and fight in any great contest with a powerful enemy. The proposal of Mr. Gladstone was the only way of dealing with the Irish question, and it came not a day too soon. We are told, however, that he ought to have waited, and that he ought to have let a whole year pass by over the ashes of the Fenian insurrection without a single word being spoken upon the subject. I think it was the part of a Statesman and the part of wisdom to do what he did ; and the expression of the opinion of the House of Commons has already gone very far to alleviate the feeling of which I have spoken, and to restore a more healthy circulation in the public opinion of Ireland. But what is the Government going to do ? I ask this because I have in my memory the debates of last session, which certainly produced an amount

of bewilderment which is utterly impossible for me to unravel. I heard Lord Stanley's speech, and I heard him say that he would not be satisfied with a mere redistribution of the finances of the Irish Church. I also heard Mr. Hardy's speech, and he said he would not be satisfied with anything that went beyond the redistribution of the revenues of the Irish Church. I likewise heard the Earl of Mayo make a speech about the endowment of the Catholic Universities ; and if I ever heard anything that was plain and simple, I say that that speech could have led to but one conviction in the minds of all who heard it—namely, that the Government were prepared to endow the Catholic Universities. (Hear, hear.) But, on the other hand, this was entirely disavowed the week after the speech was made. The levelling-up process was said to be an entire delusion ; on the contrary, the Government, in whose name Lord Mayo had spoken, declared they had never proposed to do anything of the kind, and then they turned round and charged their neighbours with intending to endow the Catholic Church. It has been said that we are going to endow denominational education. If I recollect aright, I heard Mr. Hardy say that he was for denominational education in England, and did not see why it should not be applied to Ireland. Let our friends of the Churches of England and of Scotland lay these things to heart. If Mr. Disraeli next year were to propose to abolish the Irish Church, he would do nothing stronger or more inconsistent than he did when he proposed Household Suffrage as the basis of the Reform Bill. How can anybody tell that he does not mean next year to abolish the Irish Church ? (Loud Cheers.) "Methinks he doth protest too much," for we have found by experience what these protestations have generally ended in. (Hear, hear.) Let the Church of Scotland in particular lay this matter to heart. I do not belong to the Established Church of Scotland, because I belong to the Free Church ; but I have old associations with the Church of Scotland which are very dear to me. I am descended from five generations who, from father to son, were ministers of her communion ; and I am not disposed now, although circumstances have so sadly changed, to say an unkind word upon this subject. I grieve and lament over the Disruption of 1843, and I think, if they had then listened to words of advice which were altogether spurned, the probability is that they would have met the present crisis with a front much more unbroken, and a strength far more founded in the feelings and affections of

the people. But do they not think they will be rather trusting to a broken reed if (though there are many honourable exceptions among them) they throw in their lot unreservedly with the opposite party? As I have said, you cannot possibly tell what a session may bring forth, and you have already had warning enough to make you wise in time. But suppose Mr. Disraeli does not do this, but simply reduces the Irish Church Establishment to certain limits; even then, is it not the height of folly for the Established Churches of England or Scotland to say—"You must not touch the Church of Ireland, because ultimately the same rule is sure to be applied to us?" Why, nothing is more certain than this, that the Established Church of Ireland cannot stay as it is, and that the present Government will not permit it to stay as it is. Will they proceed to apply the same principle here? For my part, if I were a member of the Established Church here, the last thing I would do would be to tie such an institution to such a dead and worn-out thing as the Irish Church. In England and Scotland the safety of the Church consists in its strengthening itself in the sympathy and good-will of the people. They would gain nothing but danger, and invite nothing but peril, by any other course. The Church of Ireland ought to stand or fall by its own merits. It is no concern of the Church of England or of the Church of Scotland, and, so far as they are concerned, they should cut themselves adrift from that wreck. Nothing can be more certain than that the Established Church of Ireland cannot and will not stand, and I for one am not prepared to encourage any assault on the sister establishments. I lament from the bottom of my heart the course into which so many are plunging, and I am certain that it can end in nothing but danger and disaster.

The next question which occurs to me in regard to University representation is that which affects the medical profession. I may say that in proportion to its importance, and the number, intelligence, and learning of its members, the medical profession has not its full weight in the councils of the nation. The reasons for this are plain enough. It is impossible for a medical man in practice to be a member of Parliament, and while the law and the Church are fully represented, it has often struck me that there is unquestionably a want of the means by which the opinions of this great and useful body of professional men could be ascertained. I think that whoever represents this and the sister University ought to do his utmost to remedy this defect, and if I should be re-

The Medical  
Profession.

turned, it will be part of my earnest endeavour to make myself more acquainted than I can be at present with the general opinions, wants, and wishes of the profession, and to give such effect to them as may seem to me to be desirable. In regard to this matter, there is a question to which I would refer. I have been asked to say a word upon it, and I may as well do so at once. I am asked whether I should be in favour of superannuations to medical officers in poorhouses in Ireland. I say certainly. I think that in all these cases it is the utmost folly and the very worst economy not to have superannuation allowances. It leads to bad service, and creates hardship, and I am entirely in favour of the proposition. I am asked also whether I am in favour of making the medical officers of parochial boards removable under the pleasure of the Board of Supervision. I am not disposed to give a categorical answer to that question, as it is not a matter which I have fully considered. My opinion is that on this matter, as in the case of the schoolmaster, there should be no power of caprice on the part of the parochial board, but that, on the contrary, there should be a protection against capricious proceedings. At the same time, the medical officer is not in the position of the inspector, who gives the whole of his time to the discharge of his duty, whereas the medical man only gives that amount of attendance which is necessary from time to time. The question, however, is, I think, a very fair question to be considered; and I am willing to give it a favourable consideration, as far as I can see at present. Some little capital has been attempted to be made in regard to the provision in the Registration Act imposing a penalty upon medical officers for not returning the cause of death to the registrars, and it is supposed that I am responsible for it. To a certain extent I may say that I am responsible, because although Lord Elcho brought in and carried the Registration of Births Bill, I assisted him in the preparation and conduct of it. Therefore the responsibility may be partly laid upon me. The state of the matter is this—If it be desirable to obtain these statistics, they ought to be obtained accurately; and I have found that in England, although the medical attendants are required to certify the cause of death, no penalty is attached, and the consequence is, that the duty is neglected. If such neglect takes place, the statistics are not reliable. I should have been glad if we could have provided some remuneration for the medical officer, as I have a strong opinion that professional services ought not to be

taken without professional remuneration. Perhaps you may say a fellow-feeling makes me wondrous kind—(laughter)—but such is my impression. No doubt it would be difficult to get money. But you will permit me to say that Registration in Scotland has turned out a great success: it has given us statistics infinitely better than those for any other part of the kingdom. The question is thus, so far, between having no penalty and no statistics, and after all, with regard to the penalty—a penalty for the non-discharge of a statutory duty—although distasteful to the feelings of the profession, it contains nothing which can be objected to in principle. It is, however, a subject causing great heartburning, and I am told I have been neglectful in the matter. I have certainly not been more so than my neighbours. We have had two Tory Governments since the bill was passed in 1854, and they do not seem to have done more to provide a remedy than I have. It is true I did not see my way to any proposition when in office, and it is always desirable in such matters to have the benefit of some experience. I am prepared to say I think the time has come when we should have an inquiry into the matter, and see whether the statistics are worth all this labour; to ascertain whether they cannot be obtained without a penalty, and if a penalty is to be imposed, whether some funds ought not to be provided for payment of those medical gentlemen, and who are often most inadequately remunerated—and whether the question should not be taken up as an imperial question; for if a penalty is good for Scotland it is good for England. There is certainly a great deal in what the medical gentlemen say, that a penalty should not be imposed on medical men in Scotland alone.

I now come to my last topic. The Chairman has said Education. truly that in the course of my political life I have had occasion to make a great many propositions in regard to the cause of education in this country. Unfortunately, they have all been failures with one exception. There is one class of men, however, who have obtained great benefit by what I did. I mean the parochial schoolmasters of Scotland; for in removing the test, which lay at the foundation of all efforts for improving the schools, I was fortunate enough to obtain the sanction of Parliament to a large increase of the remuneration and comfort of the parochial schoolmasters. I do not claim their gratitude for that, for it was only for what I have been struggling after for long, and the cause was

so manifestly just that the schoolmasters may say that I did no more than was my duty. I said in Glasgow that although I have been met year after year by a most persistent opposition from the Conservatives in Parliament, there was one gentleman from whom I received great support—I allude to Sir James Fergusson. (Hear, hear.) I wish to remedy an omission which I made on that occasion. I have to thank Lord Mure for the assistance he gave me in the passing of that measure. I had a good deal to say on the subject of education, but I fear that time will hardly allow me to finish. (Cheers.) It appears that we are all in favour of an extension of the educational system. When I read the election speeches that fill the newspapers just now, I am delighted to find that we have so many friends to the cause of education—(laughter)—I only wish we had had them a little sooner. (Applause.) If we had had them in 1854, 1855, or 1856, in all of which years I introduced Education Bills, probably education in this country might have stood on a sounder footing. (Hear, hear.) If the real feeling of the country is what it appears to me to be in these election movements, I should think the triumph of the cause was very near at hand. I have striven for it, but I understand doubts have been raised as to whether I have done anything at all—whether I have a wish to improve the position of the schoolmasters, or to do anything for the education of the people. I can only say, that if long days and nights of toil—speeding to-day and being put back to-morrow—spending session after session in anxious endeavours to do that which the wants of the country required—if that means having done nothing, then I plead guilty to the accusation; but there has hardly been a year in Parliament in which I have not made an effort for this purpose. We have many friends of education, but I fear that the friends of obstruction have been more numerous than those of progress, and the efforts made have not received from the country in general the support we were entitled to expect. Too many friends of education, according to their own ideas, have been the enemies of their neighbour's idea, and looking for some sectarian or denominational advantage. The country has a great responsibility in this matter; and with so many friends to education we ought manfully to put aside those divisions and jealousies which have hitherto kept us asunder, and combine in something that shall yet do the work of bringing up the rising generation in a knowledge that will be profitable to them. I have been

asked some questions by the schoolmasters, and I have answered them to the best of my ability. This district has always been zealous for education. It is its glory and its crown. I am told that I have not been explicit enough in one of my answers in regard to the standard of education in parochial schools. If any man for a moment has thought that I would lower the standard of education from the position it has hitherto occupied in being able to turn out boys fit to go to the Universities, it is an entire delusion. (Applause.) My individual views go beyond, and do not fall short of that standard. I not only wish to see a schoolmaster in every parish capable of bringing his scholars up to the mark of fitness for the University, but I should wish to see the average of scholars so prepared largely increased. There is nothing extravagant or unreasonable in entertaining such an expectation. The Scottish farmers, and artizans, and peasants, are very desirous of obtaining the advantage of superior education for their children, and, as has been clearly brought out in the Report of the Education Commissioners, are willing to make great sacrifices for that object. If, therefore, it be only a matter of time and of attendance, I can see no reason why a much larger contingent of our youth should not be prepared to take their places in the Universities, from the previous training of the National Schools. (Hear, hear). I shall be satisfied with no standard which falls short of this.

I wish to say a word on the system of the Privy Council Minutes. On principle, I am entirely opposed to it—first, because it is not national, but denominational; and, secondly, because it is not general, but confined to the elementary branches. But we have our own lethargy, and the obtuse and persistent obstructions which have been thrown in the way of reasonable extension of our national system, to thank for the almost inevitable necessity of now, to a certain extent, applying that system in Scotland. The difficulty of shaking ourselves free of it is mainly pecuniary. Under the Privy Council Minutes we shall be able to obtain a much larger sum than we should ever be able to persuade Parliament to grant on any other footing. I would not purchase this advantage by any alteration on the nature or the standard of our national education; but I believe both results may be combined in the way suggested by the Royal Commissioners—(hear). I should, indeed, have much preferred that a general grant, administered by Scottish officials, should have taken the place of the payments under the Privy Council Minutes;

and had I been supported in my previous attempts, this might at one time have been accomplished—(hear). But even then, and certainly now, it could hardly be expected that Parliament would be induced to give in a grant the equivalent of what the Privy Council system would produce. (Hear.)

The last observation I have to make is, that the Education Commissioners, after a very long and anxious investigation, came to a substantially unanimous Report. That is to say, as you may suppose, we were agreed in the main. There was a large amount of general harmony, though we differed on subordinate matters; and I think you will be of opinion that it was a wise proceeding to waive these as far as possible. Looking to the difficulties by which the question is surrounded, it is not desirable for any man to stand out on his own peculiar crotchets. It was exceedingly desirable that we should combine upon some system under which the children of the country should be thoroughly educated; for we know this, that however defective the system attained may be, a general system is required, and you may remedy the system from time to time as experience may direct. (Applause). It has been supposed by some that I was the insidious promoter of something very inimical to the schoolmasters in that Report—that I acted in the view of some foregone conclusion. I can only say that if anybody thinks that, I shall not take the trouble to answer him. I think what I have done in the past must have shown that I could have no other desire than that of raising the standard of education in my native land. There is no parochial schoolmaster who does not know that to be true. (Cheers). I shall not pass that charge so easily in regard to my colleagues. That was not a Whig commission. If it included men of that party, such as Mr Adam Black, Lord Ardmillan, and Mr. Murray Dunlop, it also included such men as Lord Jerviswoode, Lord Mure, Sir James Ferguson, and Mr. Shank Cook. I do not think it could have been expected that all the gentlemen forming that Commission should have been found to concur in every suggestion. They did not do so, though, as I say, they came to a substantially unanimous Report—a Report which, I am sure, will have weight with you and with the country. (Hear, and applause). I refer to it further only to say, that the thanks of Scotland are due to the gentlemen who sat on the Commission, for the careful and laborious examination they made; and the anxious attention they gave to every part of that Report. The same labour was laid upon me, as upon others, in that matter. I

do not in the least object to the Report being canvassed with the utmost care ; and the same, I am sure, may be said of my colleagues. There are some things in the Report, and many in the draft Bill, that may, and probably will, receive amendment before an educational measure is framed ; but the fact that the Commissioners did come to a nearly unanimous conclusion, is, I say, creditable to them, and hopeful for the cause. (Loud cheers.)

Now, gentlemen, I have detained you for a longer time than I intended. Let me thank you most heartily for your attendance. I am ambitious to serve my country, and I feel I could not stand in a more powerful position for that honourable service than in being sent to the House of Commons by your choice. (Applause). I have said that my ambition has been satisfied. Well, perhaps I spoke too strongly. I certainly do desire a successful issue to this contest. (Hear). I shall feel in that event, that, whatever I have succeeded in doing heretofore, my ambition has been crowned by a brilliant distinction. (Applause). I hope you will send me, as you have asked me to stand, animated by that

“Spur which the clear spirit doth raise.”

a desire not for the trappings or tinsel of office, but to be of service to our much loved land. (Loud applause).





